



CALIFORNIA NATIONAL GUARD

# NEWS Release

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## **CALIFORNIA SOLDIER USES CIVILIAN EXPERIENCE TO GET WATER FLOWING IN LOUISIANA**

**BELLE CHASSE NAVAL AIR STATION, LA.** – The California Army National Guard matched talent to the situation when it sent a soldier with civilian experience in water control to help drain flooded areas during Hurricane Katrina relief efforts.

Bravo Company's Sgt. John L. Zeller is helping county and city officials in Louisiana restructure their water and sewage systems, which were severely damaged by flooding and high winds. In civilian life, Zeller works as an associate engineer for the Marina Coast Water District of Marina, Calif., north of Monterey. As a soldier in the 2/185th Armor Battalion out of San Diego, Sgt. Zeller has helped restart pumps to drain contaminated water out of damaged areas.

"Water's dropping two feet a day as compared to two inches a day not long ago," said Zeller in mid-September. "But there's still so much to do. It's sad to see how (New Orleans) is torn apart. Power lines are down, streets are torn up, there's no water running and sewage is overflowing. They need help and I'm glad to do what I can."

Zeller works up to 20 hours a day with civilians getting pumps online and opening sewage drains. At a sewage plant, Zeller helped restart a critical pump that drains 1,000 cubic feet of water per second, Emanuel confirmed. And Zeller helped set up portable pumps, provided by civilian contractors, in various areas. The contaminated water, caused when three levees shattered, is now draining much faster.

While in uniform, the 42-year-old Californian is a tanker. After four years in the Air Force, Zeller became a civilian water treatment operator in 1987. He joined the Guard in the early 1990s and earned his engineering degree from the University of California-Riverside in 1996.

"What he's done is beyond the call of duty," said Maj. Frank Emanuel, 2/185th battalion commander. "He's been incredible. They've adopted him into the city. We were aware of his background, but we didn't know he was capable of doing what he's doing."